

Energy bill misses mark

POINT OF VIEW WAXMAN-MARKEY LEGISLATION

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America is awash in clean, affordable natural gas. In fact, we likely have more natural gas than coal. Since 2005, we added onshore domestic natural gas deliverability that exceeds the equivalent of all our oil imports from [Saudi Arabia](#). However, we have no policy to scale up our own use of natural gas.

There is no mention of scaling up the use of natural gas to be found in the entire 1,200 pages of the [Waxman-Markey](#) energy bill. Yet scaled-up natural gas use alone could meet half the Waxman-Markey CO₂ emissions goals, and at the same time cut our foreign oil imports in half.

Here are two actions to do the job:

The first can be done immediately. By mandating that natural gas-fired electricity be dispatched before coal wherever possible, we can replace about one-third of all the coal-fired electricity in the [United States](#) with natural gas and not build a single new plant. This one action would lower CO₂ emissions by about 330 million tons annually and be an important step toward the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) goal for the United States.

The second is to use the government ownership in [Chrysler](#) and [GM](#) to kick off an industrial policy to convert and retrofit half the U.S. automobile fleet to compressed natural gas. Much of the infrastructure is already in place because our existing natural gas pipelines already connect 63 million American homes where 130 million cars return each day and could easily refuel with a small natural gas fill appliance. Furthermore, most industrial facilities and urban gasoline stations are on the natural gas pipeline grid, so refueling facilities can be rapidly put in place.

These two actions would reduce oil imports by nearly 6 million barrels per day and reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 500 million tons per year, or one-quarter of the IPCC target. A large measure of America's energy security would be restored and we would be in a leadership role for the [Copenhagen](#) climate negotiations.

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